SYNOPSIS

‘Spatiality of Social Life: A Model of Spatial Complexes’

This study tries to address spatial problematic of the sociality, i.e. spatiality of social life. Spatiality of social life refers to the conception of society through spatial practices. Spatiality is social habitat filled with life, relationship, day-to-day activities, communicative interactions, socio-cultural-religious-material practices, institutional and administrative settings, community living, socio-cultural movements etc. Therefore human spatiality is the socio-cultural mode of human existence and that human life is inherently spatial in relation to different practices. As spatial problematic, the study attempts to develop a theoretical model in order to explore the constitution of spatiality and to explicate different coordinates which intersect and interconnect in spatial constitution. The study is placed both in the context of ‘spatial turn’ which conceive sociality from the perspective of space and spatial practices and the emerging ‘new cultural politics’ which account different kinds of practices like identity politics, socio-cultural movement, struggles and resistance movements etc as social practices. Therefore spatiality also accommodates different epistemological and ontological perspectives to appreciate different forms of mode of existence and transformational politics. This specific study is centred on surveying theoretical literatures on place, space and other relevant concepts related to spatiality to develop a theoretical model to conceive the complexity and constitutive components in spatiality, and bring such model to a substantive (empirical) context for explication and validation, thereby finally propose it as a model, the thesis, to study spatiality of social life. Therefore major portion of the study is attempted to explore conceptual contours which are needed for developing the model and then such model is explicated through an empirical illustration. The title of this study is conceived as ‘Spatiality of Social Life: A Model of Spatial Complexes’. This presumptive and hypothetical formulation of ‘spatial complexes’ signify that spatiality is constituted by the co-ordination

and intersection of certain underlying components. Therefore this research has been concerned with identifying and explicating such co-ordinates or components which constitute spatiality of social life. Conversely the study is concerned with developing a model of spatiality with such components and elements that could be named as “spatial complexes”. This study takes an interdisciplinary approach or convergence method and also plural in terms of epistemological concern. It is theoretically guided, conceptually viewed and also empirically explicated and validated. The substantive or empirical illustrated case is the spatial practices of community called Mar Thoma Christians whose spatial practices are concentrated in Mar Thoma Headquarters at Thiruvalla town in Kerala State. The empirical explication is mostly done through an ethnomethodological approach.

The study has been organised into five main chapters. The first chapter seeks to discuss the conception of space by Greek classical thinkers like Euclid, Plato, Aristotle followed by Enlightenment philosophers like Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant etc. These thinkers’ conceptions influenced later theoreticians of their understanding of both place and space. The early Greek philosophers conceived space as ‘absolute’, ‘homogenous’, ‘geometrical’, ‘infinite’, ‘vast’, ‘empty’, etc. For them space is an absolute, objective physical reality, i.e. space as objective physical realm which is a homogeneous expanse, an independent entity, and an empty container of things. But space was conceived later as ‘relational space’, i.e. space is understood in relation to different objects which were contained within the absolute space yet space is not affected by those objects it contained. For the Enlightenment philosophers space is mental category, category of thinking, an intuitive category of sensibility. These conceptions of space by the above mentioned philosophers are important for the ramification of place and space which are conceived as constituents of spatiality in our study. Moreover such conceptions of early thinkers on space influenced modern spatial sciences/geographical thoughts like environmental determinism, cultural

geography, regional geography, positivist geography etc. These spatial sciences conceived space as physical area in environmental places. It had a naturalised understanding of place by subsuming space under it; yet positivist geography had different conception that it understood place through spatial exploration as spatial forms (market, industry etc) and as human interaction with the space. For positivist geography space is medium of human actions, interactions, flow of materials or commodities etc; and through spatial interactions different 'areas' are connected and related. It conceived geography in terms of space, spatial activities and spatial process. The idea of space as natural physical area is shifted to an idea of medium of actions, process, spatial forms etc; and squarely it differentiated place from space that place is physical area that understood through spatial forms and human intervention; and that place is not merely a natural environmental area.

Phenomenological philosophical thinking, especially the existential phenomenology of Martin Heidegger conceived human existence in terms of space and time. He conceived space in terms of *Dasein*'s being-in-the-world. Space is human activity, involvement etc in relation to human beings practical dealings with the world, an existential interpretation of space. For him space is equi-promordial with time, the past, the history. Since Heidegger identified space and time as fundamental to human existentiality against Western Kantian conception of space and time as intuitive mental categories, his thinking radicalised Western philosophies and social theories. He also identified the significance of discursive realm of sign, the 'social-semiotic-symbolic' realm in directing *Dasein*'s orientation in space. Humanistic geography, influenced by phenomenology and hermeneutics, valorised place in relation to human life, experience, beliefs, values, meanings, belongingness, etc. For them an authentic understanding of place involves belonging to such place; and identity of individual and community emerged from such belongingness. People's day-to-day experiences and behaviours are closely associated with the place in which they live. Therefore 'human-

beings' become the central in the understanding of place. It made a humanistic exploration of place; and emphasised particularities as against generalisations, specific meanings and value in the knowing of place hermeneutically. From such understanding of place by humanistic geography it could be derived that place is a 'social construct' and people associate it with specific values and meaning. In short from the above mentioned philosophical systems and spatial sciences it could be derived that place, space and time are fundamental categories of human spatiality; and such are elaborated in subsequent explorations.

The second chapter begins with the discussion of the emergence of radical geography by emphasising 'oppositional' politics. Radical geographer's attempt was to make geographical discourse politically and socially relevant; and hence valorised place and geography with transformational politics. It addressed social issues like inequality, racism, regional poverty, discrimination against women and minority, unequal access to social services, unequal development, etc. For it the understanding of geography/place is significant only in relation to socio-spatial activities, especially transformational politics i.e. knowledge aimed at social transformation. With radical geography, the study of geography slowly emerged as study of space and society, a direction towards human geography. Radical geography had an anarchist leaning through the influence of the writings of Peter Kropotkin; and developed distinct political perspectives on alternative forms of society. And such that living together of people as small social group with mutual co-operation, a vision of spatial form of decentralised society in order to challenge capitalism. Radical geography swept into Marxist geography and historical materialism through the trajectory of David Harvey and his *Social Justice and the City* for more ethical and radical commitment for social transformations and for better critical social theory. The Marxian economic spatiality is basically originated from Karl Marx's conception of society. Karl Marx conceptualised human being, society and human history in relation to material productive activity of human

kind. But Karl Marx did not involve in the theorisation of social space as such in his theory of society. Moreover Karl Marx's conception of society was not from the perspective of spatiality of social life which emerges from any kind of spatial practices. Despite this his theory of society contains some basic problematic of social space and spatiality of human life as an exegetical possibility. For such conception spatiality is a social product associated with mode of production and the relations of production. Therefore the concrete spatiality is an area of struggle either for maintaining the existential spatiality or restructuring spatiality through radical transformation. Lefebvre's *Production of Space* set a classical foundation for the study of social space. His basic conviction on the ontology of space is that where there is space, there is human being. Social space is social reality of social relations, forms and representations. It is the mode of existence of social relations. Social space is social product. The production of social space is by means of human action and by social practice. For Lefebvre every society and every mode of production produces its own space. Lefebvrian ontology assumes that the process of life is inextricably linked with the production of different spaces. His 'spatiology' proposes an analysis of space, a triad of spatial concepts to uncover the production of space and social relations embedded in social space. This triad of spatial concepts are *Spatial practice, Representations of space* and *Representational space*. They represent three moments of *perceived* (the spatial practice of a society), *conceived* (the conceptualized space of planners, technocrats and scientists where ideology is at function) and *lived space* (the lived space of in- habitants, users and artists). This triad contributes to the production of space in different combination according to the context of mode of social relation and the historical period. Lefebvre's second important theme is the process of the production of space (productive process), i.e. the history of space, of its production qua 'reality' and of its forms and representations. With the concepts of *absolute* space, *abstract* space, *contradictory* space and *differential* space which are termed as *architectonics*,

Lefebvre describes a history of space. But in his exposition of the production of space, Lefebvre does not seek a knowledge directed towards space in itself in the form of models, typologies or prototypes of space. Space should be seen as a product, as a 'second nature', created by social practices on the 'first nature' but not as dichotomy, just to understand the product and process. Further, space as a product is not to be seen as an object or a thing, but as a set of relations that intervenes in production itself. Therefore for him, space is not isolated as a static concept rather it is dialecticized in the dual role of product-producer. Michel Foucault revolutionised the conception of society through his spatial theories. He prioritised space since modernity was 'obsessed' with history and progress. For him space is fundamental in any form of communal life and is fundamental in any exercise of power. His study mostly concentrated on the relation between geography and power. For him space is not territory but about society and power. The work *Power/Knowledge* which contain Foucault's, essays, deliberations, presentations etc, especially the article 'Questions on Geography', published as English translation in 1980 is significant in relation to the questions of space and power. The other works *The* Archaeology *of Knowledge* in 1972; *The Order of Things* in 1973; *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* in 1977; the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* in 1978; *Space, Knowledge and Power* in 1984 etc. are important to understand Foucault's spatial thinking. For Foucault space is not just passive locus of social relation but active with instrumental role as knowledge and power. For him knowledge is also space in which subject take up a position and speak of the objects with which he deals in his discourse. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* Foucault discusses the spatial implication of power, how the disciplinary institutions, disciplinary mechanisms, built and architectural forms etc. become an apparatus of power in order to exercise control over people's behaviour and attitude; and train human body according to the interest of the centres of power. Foucault re-introduces Jeremy Bentham's conception of panopticism as

disciplinary mechanism in institutional space to control and discipline large number of people. In *Madness and Civilization* he discusses the practice of panopticism in asylums and other confinements to seclude people - the poor, the unemployed, the prisoners and the insane, beggars etc – by the centres of power. Therefore Foucault introduced panopticism as a mechanism of exercising power through space; and also as a mechanism of confinement in space in order to control and discipline people according to interest of political and economic powers. He also set the foundation for an epistemology of thirdspace through the ground breaking essay *Of Other Spaces*. The epistemology of thirdspace problematises conventional binary thinking of spatial bipolarity by favouring for a new multiple conception of spatiality of social life. Therefore he introduces spatial concepts heterotopia, heterochronies etc to spatial analysis. His spatial problematisation heterotopology is focussed on micro geographies and the geo histories of otherness. It is also his critical engagement with spatial problematic of knowledge and power. Moreover he conceptualised multi-dimensional disruptive spatiality of struggles, heterogeneity etc in spatial dimension of human life. Thinking on Foucauldian mode Michel De Certeau theorised the relation between everyday life practices and spatiality. He distinguished everyday space as 'strategic' and 'tactical' spatial practices. Strategic spatial practices are associated with hegemonic space of the exercising of power and tactical spatial practices subvert such hegemonic practices by the marginalised for their own purposes, i.e. through spatial practice of tactics ordinary exercises power.

The third chapter seeks to theorise thirdspace and also spatial subjectivity. In thirdspace epistemology different 'turns' like spatial turn, postmodern turn, cultural turn etc are enmeshed into what is called as 'new cultural politics' in the theorisation of spatiality of social life. These 'turns' are different kinds of epistemological and ontological directions in the conception of social life and mode of social existence. Edward Soja argues that

postmodern social science must abandon the "modernist myth of linear narratives" which emphasis progressive, universal and historical anchor; and that social science must emphasis spatial studies routed in locality and particularity through attention to human geography. He introduces the notion of thirdspace, through his work *Thirdspace: Journey to Los Angeles and Other Real- and-Imagined Places*, to emphasis new ways of thinking about space in order to establish an equal primacy of what he called "third existential dimension". His strategy "thirding-as-Othering", opens up our spatial "imaginaries" to ways of thinking without confining to only two alternatives but by interjecting "an-other" set of choices. This "thirding", he claims, disrupts, disorders, and begins to reconstitute the conventional binary opposition in order to account other possibilities of existence. This thirdspace methodology is an attempt to develop new cultural politics which he expanded through the other work *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Region*. In *Postmetropolis* Soja presents three key arguments (1) spatial dimension is inherent in social life and theory (2) it is possible to theorise spatiality through an "urban-centred geographical imagination" and (3) by doing so it is possible to develop a critical spatial perspective. In such work Soja also used three different spatial concepts synekism, fractals and archipelago to explain spatial politics. The new cultural politics is a broader platform where different epistemological and ontological assumptions, perspectives of spatial knowledge and praxis converge into one. Similarly thirdspace methodology is advocated by Homi Bhabha through his notion 'hybridity' that introduced in his work *The Location of Culture*; and by Bell Hook through the idea of marginality and radical openness. Homi Bhabha's notion hybridity/third space connects spatial concerns with cultural politics to provide multiple identities challenging all the binaries which are part of homogenisation and universalisation of human existence with singular analytical categories. This thirdspace methodology attempts to destabilize binary thinking to open up inclusive and heterogeneous conception of space. Thirdspace is both

methodology of exploring space as well as mode of existence, heterotopic spatiality of human existence. Bell Hooks, a postcolonial black feminist, conceived heterotopic marginality as space of resistance. For her, solidarity with the marginal can create shifting and hybridised boundaries of the acceptable, liminal or heterotopic spaces in which different, often opposed, moral communities can intersect in a less threatening environment in which they can metaphorically "converse", thus opening up possibility of (if not reconciliation) at least acknowledging existence of the other. Doreen Massey, a postmodern-feminist critic, also advocates the concept of heterogeneous space; and she conceives space as the sphere of the continuous production and reconfiguration of heterogeneity in all its forms which calls forth a relational politics for a relational space. She introduces "power-geometries", a concept to capture the multiple spatialities of complex spatial environments/contexts where the mobility of people are differentiated and are intertwined with power and power relations. Similarly, David Harvey's work *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, discusses 'disruptive spatiality' resulting from multiple ontologies and thus theorises postmodern spaces. The debate on space and subjectivity is discussed because of the theorizations of spatiality of social life presuppose some theory of subjectivity and conversely all forms of subjectivity presuppose some theory of space. In other words, there is direct link between the notion subjectivity and theory of spatiality since subjects are emplaced in the constitution of spatiality and also the subjects get constituted in and through spatiality. In contemporary conceptions, the notion of subject and subjectivity involves the negotiation of a whole series of interconnected terms such as body, the self, identity, person etc. Subjectivity grounds our understanding of who we are and also different roles we perform in different specific spatial contexts of individual and collective existence. These subjectivities are not merely given rather a process and production: the place and space we inhabit produce us and we are also emplaced in the production of such place and space. Social scientists hold

different positions in relation to the question of subjectivity, the agency in action etc. which is known as structure-agency (structure-actor/agent and agency) debate. Therefore there are debates like methodological individualism and methodological holism; and other conceptions which attempt to transcend dichotomy of structure and agent/agency. Methodological individualism holds the position that actors are autonomous and rational; and agency is rooted in the intentional purpose oriented rational action of the subject. In opposition to it methodological holism holds that agency is not merely rooted in actor rather action is enabled by factors external to the subject/actor. Yet other conceptions by Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens attempt to integrate both structure and agent in social action and behaviour as part of the constitution of socio-cultural world. The contemporary debates on spatial subjectivity is enriched by Foucauldian discourse theory of subjectivity, Lacannian theory of subject formation in symbolic and linguistic horizon and Althusserian notion of ideological interpellation of subject.

The fourth chapter is an elaboration of configurative elements or co-ordinates in the 'genealogy' or constitution of spatiality of social life which finally direct towards modelling spatiality of social life as "spatial complexes". Therefore this chapter has three important focuses, firstly, the recapitulation of the categories 'place', 'space' and 'time' which are already discussed in the previous chapters yet some more ramifications of such conceptions to integrate 'place', 'space' and 'time' as co-ordinates in spatiality. Secondly, the conceptual exposition of three interfaces and its intersection with other elements in constituting spatiality are elucidated. These interfaces are ideology/ideological space (or ideological expression), being-in-the-world/lived space (or lived space of the emplaced subject) and social semiotic space (or symbolic expression). Such interfaces are mostly the cultural and communicative dimension of spatiality. But there is no bifurcation of cultural and social in spatiality rather recasting cultural in to sociality since modernity kept prejudice against it that culture is

relegated to subjective personal realm. Thirdly, it formulates a 'post-humanistic' conception of spatial subjectivity and agency that such emerges within 'spatial complexes' in which the 'emplaced subject' is also part. The subject become constitutive of spatiality and become constituted in and through spatiality. The 'emplaced subject' is the subject 'in-spatial complexes', both as constituent and as constituted. Moreover agency is the effect of 'spatial complexes' that it emerges within the intersectional network of spatial complexes consist of factors like personal and impersonal; material and symbolic. Finally, theoretical and conceptual ramification of 'place', 'space' and 'time' configuration and different 'interfaces' in the constitution of spatiality of social life is done. Therefore the components of place, space and time in spatiality; three interfaces; and the 'post-humanistic' spatial subjectivity and agency are conceived in the constitution of spatiality. All these elements together are conceived as what is called as "spatial complexes", to come out with a model of spatiality which is modelled and explicated/validated in the succeeding chapter.

The final chapter is the model 'spatial complexes' and the case illustration to explicate and validate such model of spatiality. The model is a conceptual ramification and theoretical codification; and not a diagrammatical depiction to describe and explain the reality of spatiality. The proposition 'complexes' signifies that multiple factors with complexity get coordinated and intersected in the constitution of reality. In such way 'spatial complexes' denotes that spatiality is constituted by multiple factors of social construction which get intersected in spatial practices. In other words, spatiality cannot reduce to one single factor or give primacy to one factor over another as different epochs have theorised in the understanding of sociality. That there is irreducibility of spatiality to one single factor rather different factors coordinate spatiality through its intersection and interconnection. 'Spatial complexes' is modelled with such constitutive elements which are ramified in the study. The model is explicated and validated through a case illustration and therefore

different spatial practices in Mar Thoma Head quarters spatiality are analysed. Such is a religio-secular spatiality that religious and secular practices are enmeshed in Mar Thoma Head quarters spatial practices. The practices explored are economic practices, modern educational practices in which the Mar Thoma community is a stakeholder, spatial practice of developmental activities for empowering economically weak, religious administrative practices and collective religious practices of the community. From such empirical exploration it is explicated that space, place and time are active coordinates which get intersected in spatial practices and enable spatiality of social life. More over such components are socially constructed through spatial practices. The materiality of such practices creates its own social space involving different actors based on different relational positions with power, status, and hierarchy and also on differentiated behaviours, actions and practices. The category place becomes significant because of the spatial practice and gets intersected in spatiality; people associate and identify place with meaning and value in terms of spatial practice and ideological imbibing and believes. Place is not a natural area rather a social construct through spatial practice. Time as social memory, tradition, different trajectories of the past, as daily routines etc. is intertwined in present spatial practice and therefore gets intersected in spatiality. Different times are also converged as 'hybridchrony', a single entity, to actualise practices. It is also explicated that the interfaces of ideological space, semiotic space and lived space of the emplaced subject are also get intersected in spatial practice to constitute spatiality. Ideologies as ideas, norms, ethics, customary practices etc. are implicated in spatial practices and also interlaced with other factors in the spatiality. These ideologies itself are complex and multiple, converges together as 'ideological simultaneity' to effectuate practices. Spatial practices create symbolic horizon, a semiotic space of its own through built forms, representation, codes of etiquettes etc communicating the particular nature of spatiality. These become spatial codes which monitor the interpretation of spatial

activities. The lived space, the existentiality of emplaced actor as being-in-the-world through spatial practice actualises social life of human beings. Moreover the emplaced subject is also constitutive of and is getting constituted in and through spatiality, therefore spatial subjectivity in spatial complexes. The emplaced subject/actors are able to act because of the multiple factors which constitute spatial complexes. In other words agency of actors is an effect of the network of constitutive factors in spatial complexes, hence, it is post-humanistic conception of subjectivity and agency. That agency is neither rooted absolutely in acting subject nor in externality but in network of personal and impersonal, material and symbolic factors which constitute the 'spatial complexes' in which the acting subject is also take part. The agency is also based on the specific position of the actor in the social space. All these elements in the "spatial complexes" are the constitutive components of spatiality since their co-ordinations, interconnection and intersections constitute the social life. As conclusion, the model "spatial complexes" is proposed as thesis. The model is both ontological and epistemological. That the model enables us to suppose what constitute social world; and also it could use as a theoretical tool to know spatiality, the flow, economy and *oikos* of human existence.